

Physical Activity Promotion in Primary Care

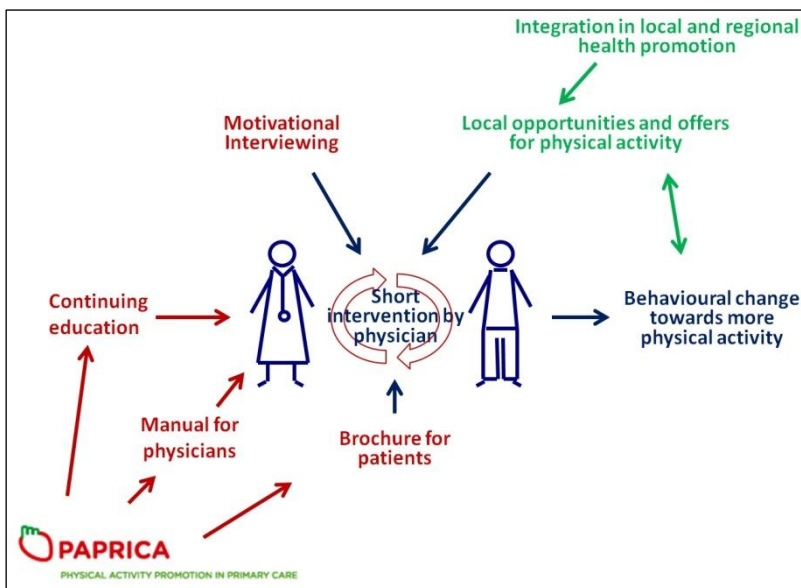
Physical activity and health – the role of the physician

New scientific research published in the Lancet has shown that the adverse health impact of physical inactivity at the population level is comparable to the one of smoking and obesity. Non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes represent a growing burden for primary care. Regular physical activity is one of the cornerstones in the fight against non-communicable diseases. A number of successful approaches to physical activity promotion have been identified. The specific role and potential of the physician in this context emerges clearly both from international studies and from experiences in Switzerland.

A whole range of approaches to physical activity promotion in primary care has already been developed in Switzerland, with documentation of effectiveness for several of them. However, none of these approaches has been widely adopted by the medical community. Therefore PAPRICA (Physical Activity Promotion in Primary Care) has been developed in a multi-year and multi-partner process including the Swiss College for Primary Care Medicine, the Policlinique Médicale Universitaire in Lausanne, the Ligue Vaudoise contre les Maladies Cardiovasculaires and the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine of the University of Zurich. PAPRICA is based on international evidence as well as on established approaches and tools, but it is streamlined to the specific demands of primary care practices and has been successfully tested in both the French speaking and the German speaking part of Switzerland.

The PAPRICA approach

Inhabitants of Switzerland value their family physicians greatly and appreciate it if they address their patients' physical activity behaviour. PAPRICA offers targeted continuing education programmes for physicians, using the established



Thursday afternoon format. These training sessions provide background knowledge, hands-on experience and counselling skills based on the motivational interviewing technique which has been successfully introduced also for other aspects of prevention and health promotion in primary care. PAPRICA provides a manual for physicians, a brochure for patients and additional counselling support.

Physical Activity Promotion in Primary Care is most successful when general counselling and strategies for behavioural change can make a link to specific opportunities and offers for physical activity. Through the unique access of physicians to individuals of all backgrounds and interests, this integration also enables local physical activity and sports promotion institutions to extend their reach.

National implementation in Switzerland since October 2012

Since 2009 PAPRICA is implemented in the French speaking canton of Vaud. In collaboration with the move>med Swiss Olympic Medical Center at the Balgrist University Hospital in Zurich, the training module has been adapted for the German speaking part of Switzerland. Continuing education in PAPRICA is offered to physicians in a growing number of cantons. The Swiss Society for Sports Medicine had "Physical activity promotion in health care settings" as the main topic of its annual congress in Interlaken on 18 and 19 October 2012. Not only PAPRICA, but also experiences from other European countries as well as the "Exercise is Medicine" initiative of the American College of Sports Medicine ACSM were presented, and the possibilities for collaboration and exchange between medical societies and across national borders were explored.